[English]

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Sir, there are hundreds of instances like this. We are not new Members of Parliament. Let the House not be misguided Statements on different issues were made on different dates in both the Houses of Parliament. We have no objection whatsoever. Now, the point is that we wanted to see the statement.

The Table Office did not allow us because it has not been laid...*(Interruptions)* Let me finish.

The second points, Shri Srikant Jena, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minister of Tourism is right In Rajya Sabha, they have accepted to its laying on the Table. As a former Minister, I had seen it. Tomorrow, that is, on Monday, they will ask clarifications. They will not leave like that. Now I, myself, have been asked by the TV people about my comments on these remarks. I told them, 'I am sure that whatever has come in the newspaper may not be correct and unless I hear, how can I say?' So I will say, if you can wait up to eight o' clock, heavens will not fall. We can wait for another 20 minutes. let him read it.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : In view of these circumstances, you may please read the Statement.

18.11 hrs.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

INCIDENT OF ARSON AND MASSACRE IN THE BHOJPUR DISTRICT OF BIHAR

[English]

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA) : The hon. Members will recall that 19 persons were killed in village Bathanitola. Barki-Kharaun under Sahar Police Station of Bhojpur District of Bihar on the 11th July, 1996 and I had made a *suo-motu* statement on the incident in this august House. In order to find out the ground realities, I visited the village Bathanitola on 17th July (afternoon). I also had discussions with the Chief Minister of Bihar and senior officials of the Bihar Government. Further, facts and circumstances of this incident which have been brought to light may be mentioned as follows :

As part of background to the incident the Government of Bihar has mentioned that on 29-4-96, there was an exchange of fire between CPI(ML) and the Ranbir Kisan Mahasangh (RKMS) activists in village Barki-Kharaun of Police Station Sahar, District Bhojpur. Following this incident, police had arrested Gupteshwar Singh of the Ranbir Kisan Mahasangh and Naimuddin of CPI(ML) on 30-4-96 and sent them to jail. Gupteshwar Singh and Naimuddin came out on bail on 23-5-96 and 11-6-96 respectively. Thereafter, tension mounted in the area again. There was an exchange of fire between CPI(ML) activists and RKMS activists on 8th, 9th and 10th July, 1996. RKMS activists suspected that Naimuddin was the brain behind inviting CPI(ML) armed squads to attack the RKMS supporters. One Sultan Mian (a CPI(ML) activist) was murdered by RKMS activists on 25-4-96; Naimuddin was said to have played a key role in receiving his dead body and in its burial. This reportedly infuriated the RKMS activists. Hence, RKMS activists of around 60 in number, proceeded on 11-7-96 to attack CPML activists, particularly Naimuddin in Bathani Tola.

The State Administration of Bihar has also mentioned that added to this was the desire for revenge of the killing of nine Ranbir Sena supporters on 5-5-96 at village Narhi in Sahar Police Station as a sequel to the on-going series of clashes between RKMS and CPI(ML) over the past two years or so. In 1996 seven incidents of this nature had taken place resulting in the killing of and injury to a number of people. Such incidents have occurred even in 1995.

The State Government has claimed that no specific request for protection was received from the local administration or the local residents. There were no police camps at the site of the incident on 11-7-96 but there were at least three police pickets within a radius of about half to one-and-a-half kms. of the place of occurrence. Conventional firearms/country-made firearms and sharp-cutting weapons were used in this latest incident of violence. As per the version of Bihar Government, 20 accused persons, named in the First Information Report (FIR), have been arrested while six others of non-FIR category have also been arrested. One Sub Inspector, five Havaldars and 18 Constables who were posted on picket duty near the place of occurrence, have been suspended on charges of dereliction of duty.

As a further part of this action, 18 Ranvir Sena activists have reportedly been arrested on 15.7.1996 in addition to the 26 already mentioned. Raids and searches are continuing.

Three injured persons, namely Radhika Devi, Saddam Hussain and Kusuma Kumari, have been admitted in the Patna Medical College Hospital in a seriously injured state. Two other injured, namely, Shailendra Choudhary and Baby, are in Arrah Sadar Hospital. In the wake of the massacre, three licenced DBBL guns, two country made pistols and 90 rounds of ammunitions have so far been recovered. Four sets of Khaki uniforms, fake stamp of Arms Magistrate etc., have also been recovered.

The families of Naimuddin and that of his son have been treated as two units and, therefore, Rs. one lakh of compensation to each has been sanctioned. The State Administration has further undertaken additional relief measures to help the distressed and the families of the deceased.

Like Ranbir Sena, two other Senas are reportedly operating in Bihar. These are the Sunlight Sena and the

Gram Suraksha Parishad. The Bihar Government has denied that 1000 people have died due to the Sena's activity. The Bihar Government has further stated that Ranbir Kisan Mahasangh or the Ranvir Sena came into being on 22.1.95 and so far 69 persons belonging to the CPIML have been killed by the RKMS activists. About the Police Posts around the area, the information furnished by the State Administration is that three police pickets were deputed around the area at the places known as Barki-Kharaun village, Patalpura village and Chhotki Kharan village. About the nature of arms with the Police in the area, it has been mentioned by the State Administration that the Police in the area have got conventional weapons.

On the role of Intelligence agencies, it has been gathered that as many as 8 intelligence reports starting from 25.5.1996 were sent to the Superintendent of Police Arrah and the reports contained apprehension of attack on Bathani Tola/Barki-Kharaun. In response, the Superintendent of Police had reportedly deployed armed forces in the area. On the norms of transferring District Magistrate/Superintendent of Police, as a result of such incidents, the State Administration has revealed that there are no set of rigid rules for transferring DM and SP in case of such incidents and that the decision for transfer is taken in individual cases depending on the circumstances. On the suggestion that the forthcoming conference of Director Generals of Police should discuss such grave issues, the Government of Bihar has agreed to this. On the issue of long-term solution to such problems of grave nature, the response of the State Administration of Bihar is that the Minimum Wages Act, Land Reforms measures and the poverty alleviation programmes are required to be implemented vigorously.

During the course of my visit the Chief Minister of Bihar and his team of senior officers asked for the additional requirement of Central Para-Military Forces for deployment in Bihar, particularly in 12 reportedly problem districts for a period of two months. They also raised the issue of modernisation of the Bihar Police to combat crime.

Stressing on the deployment of Central Para-Military Forces, the State Administration officials expressed the view that the Central Forces have better utility content and value and that the alternative suggestion of raising the strength of the local forces will be time-consuming and also will not be immediately productive.

Having regard to the detailed position, already mentioned to the hon. Members, I would like to make the following observations :-

(1) It has not been disputed by the State Administration that the failure of the District machinery was the immediate reason for the tragedy. In fact, it has been admitted by the State Administration that despite availability of intelligence input about the impending tragedy and even positioning of forces around, the massacre could not be averted either due to connivance or lack of courage on the part of the law enforcement agencies. This certainly calls for serious introspection and deterrent action as a long-term remedy to such a situation. I do hope that the State Administration will keep us informed about the steps taken in this direction in future.

(2) It is agreed that sustained combing operations to recover illegal weapons in the mentioned twelve problem districts of Bihar is an important necessity. The request of the State Government for additional deployment of twenty companies of paramilitary forces will be examined and considered, once our commitments in some other States for the impending Assembly elections are over. Till such time, the State Government should mobilise its own resources to accord priority to the combing operations and this point has been emphasised by me during the course of my discussions with the State Government. I have also laid stress on the training and leadership requirement in the local force. Insulation of vital institutions like the law and order machinery from any external pressure will also go a long way to improve matters.

(3) The request for additional support - that means, financial support - on the modernisation of Bihar Police Force will also be looked into on the basis of objective consideration of facts.

(4) A long-term solution to this serious problem has to be found out and as admitted by the State Government, Minimum Wages Act, land reform measures and poverty alleviation programmes will be required to be implemented vigorously. For this purpose, the State apparatus has to perform the basic role and will, in fact, have to act as the prime mover. The Central Government will surely lend a helping hand. Land ceiling laws shall also have to be properly implemented in Bihar. Land should not remain in the hands of a select few as such a situation will surely generate further socio-economic tension in the State and the conflict areas will widen.

(5) Unemployment problem is also giving an alarm signal and this has to be addressed much more vigorously than has been done so far.

(6) Finally, the rural poverty issue should receive Government's special and urgent attention and the development of rural areas should now be our utmost concern, as has already been emphasised in the Common Minimum Programme of the United Front Government.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER :Now the House stands adjourned to meet again at 11.00 A.M. on July 22, 1996.

18.23 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Monday, July 22, 1996/Asadha 31, 1918 (Saka).